

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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February 6, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER  
FROM: AL HAIG  
SUBJECT: Meeting With Senator Scott

The purpose of your meeting with Senator Scott is to brief him in general terms on the operation which will be conducted by the ARVN in Laos, as well as bringing him up-to-date on the Chup operation in Cambodia.

Talking Points.

Tell Congressman Ford that in order to insure continued U.S. troop withdrawals under the Vietnamization program, the President has decided to provide U.S. air assistance for two South Vietnamese operations, one to be conducted in Laos and the other, which is already in progress, in Cambodia.

Operation in Laos.

Using the map which covers all of Southeast Asia, briefly explain the significance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the key role of the logistics hub in the vicinity of Tchepone.

- Because the port of Sihanoukville was closed to the enemy when the Lon Nol government came to power in Cambodia in March 1970, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong must depend on the Ho Chi Minh Trail through southern Laos to support their operations in South Vietnam and Cambodia.
- There are three principal exit points from North Vietnam through which most enemy logistics flow to Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam: the Mu Gia Pass, the Ban Karai Pass and the area just north of the DMZ.

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- Tchepone is the control center where routes leading from these North Vietnamese exit points merge. A major base area is located in the area.
- From the base areas in the vicinity of Tchepone some of the supplies move eastward directly into the southern area of South Vietnam. South of Tchepone the logistics route splits into several segments. The main portion of the enemy supplies moves down the old trail bordering the South Vietnamese border and entering South Vietnam at various points and the newly developed complex along Highway 23, through Attapeu, and down the Mekong corridor leading to Cambodia.
- The magnitude of the enemy's preparation for this year's logistical campaign surpassed previous efforts. The North Vietnamese have sharply increased the amount of military equipment and supplies which they have introduced into the southern Laotian area. They have also significantly increased the armed forces deployed there. The maximum peak surge in logistics activity is estimated to occur early in the dry season between the middle and end of February. At the present time a large number of supplies are probably in the vicinity of Tchepone and approaching Tchepone.

Describe the operation as follows:

- Early on February 8, South Vietnamese armed forces will cross into Laos and attack enemy sanctuaries close to the border of South Vietnam between the 16th and 17th parallels.
- The South Vietnamese action is intended to disrupt the flow of supplies and men further south down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and thereby to enhance the safety and security of South Vietnam as the U. S. continues to withdraw personnel under the Vietnamization program.
- U. S. involvement will be as follows:
  - . The U. S. will assist by providing whatever air power -- combat, logistics and medical evacuation, either fixed wing or helicopter --

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is required to augment the capabilities of the South Vietnamese. In addition, U. S. artillery will support the ARVN from positions exclusively within the territory of South Vietnam. Therefore, except for the artillery and some troop and logistics lift for ARVN forces, U. S. operations in Laos will not be essentially different from those carried on in the past.

. No U. S. ground troops or advisors will cross into Laotian territory.

-- The incursion into Laotian territory is justifiable:

. The territory in which this action will take place has been subjected to U. S. air attacks since 1965 and is therefore not a new theater of military operations. It has become more critical because of the closure of Sihanoukville.

. The territory of Laos on which this action will take place has been invaded and controlled by North Vietnamese armed forces for many years in violation of international law and in violation of obligations undertaken by North Vietnam in the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements.

. The original Laotian civilian population has long since fled from the area which is totally occupied by North Vietnamese armed forces. The Laotian government has admitted its inability to exert its control or to expel the North Vietnamese.

. The actions being taken by the South Vietnamese, assisted by us, are fully consistent with international law.

. The actions are being reported to the President of the Security Council of the United Nations by the GVN and to the Geneva Co-Chairman and to the International Control Commission Governments.

-- The action is primarily the result of a South Vietnamese decision and is of limited scope and duration.

-- There will be no occupation of Laotian territory and South Vietnamese forces will retire when their mission is accomplished.

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Chup Operation.

Because of the extensive enemy operations in Cambodia, the President has also agreed to provide air support, where necessary, to South Vietnamese forces that have recently launched an operation along Route 7 between the South Vietnamese border and Kompong Cham on the Mekong River.

-- The operation is designed to disrupt enemy base areas and forces in the Chup plantation area. It will:

- . Clean out newly established sanctuary areas being developed by three enemy divisions operating in the area and thereby frustrate enemy attempts to initiate main force operations in the vital areas of III and IV Corps in South Vietnam.
- . Concurrently relieve pressure on the still poorly equipped and poorly trained Cambodian forces.
- . Maintain the momentum of Vietnamization through the benefits acquired in the leadership development and combat experience of our ARVN forces. (The Cambodian operation resulted in a quantum improvement in ARVN competence and capability.)

-- The Chup operation involves U. S. air support only in those instances in which the South Vietnamese are unable to meet the needs of their forces within their own resources. The following assistance will be provided where needed:

- . Tactical and fighter bomber air support.
- . Helicopter gun ship support.
- . Logistics and troop lift support, utilizing helicopter and fixed wing aircraft.
- . Medical evacuation.

The operation does not involve U. S. ground forces or U. S. military advisors.

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- The operation is expected to extend throughout the dry season.
- Thus far the operation appears to be quite successful:
  - . Preliminary reports indicate that in several sharp engagements with the enemy in the Chup plantation area the ARVN have killed some 170 of the enemy and detained 15 while losing less than 30 of their own troops.
  - . Initial objectives have been seized.

After most careful deliberation, the President has concluded that both these operations are necessary to insure the success of our withdrawal program and of Vietnamization.

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